

REMARKS

Applicants have carefully reviewed this application in light of the Office Action mailed September 26, 2003. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's consideration of the Application and respectfully request favorable action in this case

Interview Summary

Applicants' attorney, Mr. Jeffery D. Baxter (Reg. No. 45,560), conducted a telephonic interview with Examiner Ricardo M. Pizarro on September 12, 2003. Applicants submit this summary of the telephonic interview to record Applicants' understanding of the substance of the interview and to comply with M.P.E.P. § 713.04.

During the interview, the Examiner and the attorney for Applicants discussed the Examiner's election restriction. In response to the election restriction, Applicants agreed to the withdrawal of Claims 15-30 from the Application.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy and opportunity to conduct the telephonic interview.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgement that Claims 2-7, 9-14, and 32-37 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim.

Although Applicants believe that all pending claims are allowable over the prior art of record without amendment, Applicants have rewritten Claims 2-4, 9-11, and 32-34 in independent form by incorporating the limitations of their respective base Claims 1, 8, and 31. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of independent Claims 2-4, 9-11, and 32-34.

The remaining pending claims are dependent Claims 5-7, 12-14, and 35-37, which Applicants have amended to depend from Claims 4, 11, and 34 respectively. Because these dependent claims incorporate the limitations of their respective base claims, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of dependent Claims 5-7, 12-14, and 35-37.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In the Office Action mailed September 26, 2003, the Examiner rejected Claims 1, 8, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,841,763 issued to Leondires et al. Although Applicants believe all pending claims are allowable over the prior art of record without amendment, Applicants have cancelled independent Claims 1, 8, and 31, without prejudice or disclaimer, to expedite issuance of this Application. Applicants retain the right to pursue the subject matter of these cancelled claims in a continuation application.

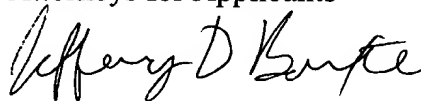
CONCLUSION

Applicants have made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. For the foregoing reasons, and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicants respectfully request full allowance of pending Claims 2-7, 9-14, and 32-37. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference or an interview would advance prosecution of this Application in any manner, the undersigned attorney for Applicants stands ready to conduct such a conference at the convenience of the Examiner.

Applicants enclose a check for \$344.00 to cover the cost of filing four (4) additional independent Claims. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 02-0384 of Baker Botts L.L.P.

Respectfully submitted,

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